



The Sixth Annual USAWC Reserve Component Symposium *Achieving Unity of Effort in Responding to Crises*

Workshop #3:

“Examine the military’s role within the construct of the National Response Plan and their interaction with civilian response and recovery efforts at the federal, state, and local levels”

BY PROFESSOR JOHN TROXELL

In response to hurricanes Katrina and Rita the military mounted a massive response that saved many lives and greatly assisted recovery efforts. The military took proactive steps and responded with about 50,000 National Guard and 20,000 active federal personnel. Based on its June 2005 civil support strategy, the Department of Defense (DOD) relied heavily on the Guard during the initial response. In addition, active duty forces were alerted prior to landfall and key capabilities such as aviation, medical, and engineering forces were initially deployed. Growing concerns about the magnitude of the disaster prompted DOD to deploy large, active ground units to supplement the Guard beginning about 5 days after landfall. Afterward, President Bush commented, “It is now clear that a challenge on this scale requires greater federal authority and a broader role for the armed forces – the institution of our government most capable of massive logistical operations on a moment’s notice.” He went on to say, “Four years after the frightening experience of September the 11th, Americans have every right to expect a more effective response in a time of emergency.” The challenge for this working group was to examine, in broad terms, what the military’s role should be in responding to catastrophic incidents in the homeland.

Workgroup participants represented the leading stakeholder organizations in homeland defense and security affairs, including the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Homeland Defense and America’s Security Affairs, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the United States Coast Guard (USCG), the Joint Staff and Joint Forces Command, the United States Northern Command (NORTHCOM), the National Guard Bureau, and the Office of the Chief of Army Reserve. The local and state perspective was provided by a former county emergency management director and by the Pennsylvania Director of Homeland Security. Subject matter expert presentations were presented by NORTHCOM on “Military Operations and the National Response Plan (NRP),” and by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) on “National Incident Management System: Program Overview.” The workgroup focused on three specific questions:

- Question #1: What are the expected/desired roles of the military under the new NRP?
- Question #2: What actions has DOD taken to comply with the National Incident Management System (NIMS)? What actions should DOD undertake to effectively adopt/implement NIMS/ Incident Command System (ICS)?
- Question #3: How can the military enhance cooperative relationships with intergovernmental, interagency and non-governmental organization (NGO) partners?

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Deliberations began with the recognition that a set of assumptions should be enumerated to properly frame the discussion. The charge for this symposium was to focus on the “two percent” of events that could qualify as Catastrophic Incidents with national impact, directly implying that DOD will have a significant role in responding to such an incident. The DOD response would be conducted in the context of the following activities:

- The Secretary of DHS would have invoked the National Response Plan–Catastrophic Incident Supplement (NRP-CIS).
- Combined state, local, and other federal agencies’ capabilities would be overwhelmed. These entities would still be very actively involved in the response but the magnitude of the requirement would exceed their capabilities.
- EMACs (Emergency Management Assistance Compacts) would be functioning, but would be likewise overwhelmed by the scale of the requirements, and by competing requirements in the surrounding areas.
- The President would have authorized the use of federal resources.
- Public and elected officials would expect a proactive federal response.

NRP and the Military

Consistent with a recommendation in the Homeland Security Council’s report, *The Federal Response to Hurricane Katrina: Lessons Learned*, the Secretary of Homeland Security is revising the NRP. Originally expected to be released by June 1, 2007, the revised NRP has been delayed to provide additional time for review. One of the key issues included in the revision process, however, pertains to the possible increased responsibility for DOD. The workgroup tackled this issue by briefly commenting on expected roles under the existing NRP, and then went on to discuss desired roles on the revised NRP. Current expectations include the requirement for military forces to respond to domestic incidents. These forces include both state controlled (principally the National Guard operating under a range of authorities), and Federal controlled forces (principally active forces.) There was general agreement that the range of authorities available, state active duty, Title 32 and Title 10 remain appropriate and provide an important degree of flexibility in the employment of these forces. The second expectation is that the military will promptly respond to validated requests for assistance.

Concerning the revised NRP, several desired roles and/or enhancements in the military’s ability to contribute to a national response were enumerated. These included pre-scripted mission assignments, increased visibility and access to Title 10 forces, and the need for detailed supporting plans.

The first enhancement addresses the last point made above. In order to enhance the rapidity of response there is a need to refine and expand pre-scripted mission assignments (MAs). MAs essentially identify capability packages that would be needed to respond to various domestic scenarios. The existence of pre-scripted MAs would streamline the Request for Assistance (RFA) process by having pre-identified military capabilities that would be needed for different scenarios. Candidate MAs are shown in figure 1.

A second enhancement is the need for improved visibility and access to Title 10 forces. The reserve forces of the various services, to include the USAR, represent an immediate response capability, but their employment in response to domestic incidents is currently restricted by law. Therefore, policies must be developed, in conjunction with the new NRP, to change the law and allow reserve forces to contribute to domestic response situations. This change would represent a significant improvement in the military’s ability to support civil authorities. Reserve component capabilities consist of those types of support units that would be most useful

Pre-Scripted MAs/RFAs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rotary Wing Lift (Medium and Heavy) • Tactical and Strategic Transportation Support • Air Component Coordination Element (ACCE) • Airborne C2 In Support of Emergency Management • Airspace Control (Ground) • Communication Support - First Responders, 25 User and 75 User Packages • Emergency Route Clearance • Defense Coordinating Officer (DCO)/ Defense Coordinating Element (DCE) • Aerial Damage Assessment • Full Motion Video (FMV) Capability for Incident Awareness and Assessment • State/Regional Emergency Preparedness Liaison (SEPLO/REPLO) Teams • Prepare Temporary Housing Sites • Mobilization Center(s) and/or Operational Staging Area(s) • Fuel Distribution Points - Ground Vehicle and Military Rotary Wing Aircraft • Rotary Wing Medical Patient Evacuation • Deployable DOD Temporary Medical Treatment Facility(ies) • Strategic Patient Movement and Airlift (NDMS Activation) • Mortuary Affairs Assistance for Remains Recovery and Identification • DoD Public Affairs Broadcast Support to Joint Information Center

Figure 1: Pre-Scripted MAs/RFAs

in response situations, and similar to National Guard formations, their geographic dispersion enhances their inherent familiarity with state and local entities. Access to Title 10 forces should also emulate the EMAC arrangements developed for the National Guard. The ability to leverage resources on a regional basis would greatly facilitate the military's response. Finally, visibility of Title 10 capabilities would be enhanced by conducting more "joint/combined" exercises that include the full range of responders from local to state to federal. Exercises that have robust participation by Title 10 components, both active and reserve, will contribute to a greater understanding of what types of capabilities these forces can bring to a response situation.

The final step to enhance the military's response capability is the development of detailed supporting plans for each of the 15 National Planning Scenarios. These plans should contain pre-approved (pre-scripted) MAs and become an integral part of the exercise program mentioned above.

DOD and NIMS/ICS

The National Incident Management System (NIMS) is the common incident management framework. NIMS is based on the premise that the utilization of a common incident management framework will give emergency management/response personnel a flexible yet standardized system for emergency management and incident response activities. Additionally, NIMS provides an organized set of standardized operational structures, one of which is the Incident Command System (ICS), which is critical in allowing disparate organizations and agencies to work together in a predictable, coordinated manner. To reiterate, the second question was: What actions has DOD taken to comply with the National Incident Management System (NIMS)? What actions should DOD undertake to effectively adopt/implement NIMS/ Incident Command System (ICS)? Once again the workgroup tackled this question in two parts: first, reviewing those actions that DOD has already taken; and second considering those actions that are either planned or proposed.

Actions already taken begin with the DepSecDef Memo, November 29, 2005, that directs department wide compliance with the NIMS. DOD organizations can turn to many pockets of excellence concerning the adoption of the NIMS framework. The first is the U.S. Air Force which has mandated and put into practice the use of the NIMS framework for all emergency response actions on all Air Force installations. As a result, the Air Force emergency management and response community has developed a high degree of familiarity with the NIMS framework and structure. Another example is the U.S. Coast Guard which has developed NIMS compliant Joint Field Office Support Teams and employs these teams in appropriate situations to ensure operations are conducted in a NIMS compliant manner. DOD can also rely on the many National Guard organizations that have obtained a high degree of understanding and proficiency in the NIMS framework. In addition to these pockets of excellence, DOD has enacted many post-Katrina reforms such as the creation of ARNORTH and AFNORTH and the Defense Coordinating Officer/Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officer (DCO/EPLO) structure to improve DOD's ability to operate in a NIMS compliant interagency/intergovernmental environment.

Planned and proposed actions, according to the workgroup, should focus on exercises and education. DOD should conduct recurring exercises and experiments to institutionalize the expertise resident in Joint Task Force Civil Support (JTF-CS) and other NIMS/ICS compliant structures. These exercises must include federal, state, and local players to ensure that interoperability across all levels of government is stressed and demonstrated by using the NIMS framework. The Professional Military Education (PME) system should be adjusted to ensure the Defense Support to Civil Authorities (DSCA) is infused throughout the system. One specific educational tool that was highlighted is the excellent web-based training program developed by FEMA. To provide additional training and operational experience in NIMS/CIS, DOD installations should routinely use this framework for all emergency response procedures, similar to the USAF adoption of the Incident Management System. Such routine use will contribute to increased efficiency and interoperability when military organizations are required to respond to a DSCA situation.

Additional actions included resource typing and credentialing of personnel to ensure that the federal and state military capabilities are referenced in the same terms as the broader response community. Such typing and credentialing facilitates visibility, interoperability, and speed of response. One final initiative, based on the USCG practice of Joint Field Support Teams, is the possibility of creating NIMS/CIS "plugs" for Joint Task Force Headquarters (JTF HQs). These plugs would consist of appropriately sized teams that have been trained and exercised in the NIMS framework and could augment a traditional "warfighting" headquarters that might be required to support a DSCA mission.

Cooperative Relationships

Any response to a catastrophic event will include multiple authorities, jurisdictions, and the full range of levels of government. These challenges are far too complex for any one department/agency – at any level of government. Operations will inevitably require close cooperation between various organizations with military, political, economic, public safety and other forms of expertise and resources. Interagency diversity – differing cultures, hierarchy, biases, and misperceptions makes unity of effort difficult. Consequently, meeting these challenges requires the development of cooperative relationships among all relevant actors.

Cooperative relationships with interagency and intergovernmental partners will be facilitated by incorporating the measures mentioned above that would assist the military's ability to operate within the NIMS framework. Therefore, two of the major items concerning this point are related to the need to conduct recurring exercises with the full range of partners and the need to educate military leaders through the PME process. Additional steps that can take advantage of activities that are already extant include the need to share Liaison Officers (LNOs) and various best practices across the response community. The exchange of trained and empowered LNOs should always be viewed as a top priority. As mentioned earlier, the DCO/EPLO structure should be leveraged for the inherent linkages and structure that they bring to the mission.

Another major activity concerns planning. Planning in the response community is becoming focused on the 15 National Planning Scenarios. DOD should assume a lead effort in assisting interagency and intergovernmental partners in their planning efforts. Planning is a core competency of the military and this competency needs to be leveraged throughout the community. The military should endeavor to provide teams of planners to help in this effort. In order to foster a cooperative spirit in this planning effort the military should adopt an approach of “leading from the rear,” with the clear intent of assisting and not owning the entire process. Plans also need to take into account the local, regional and state variations.

The workgroup concluded that unity of effort is easier to say than to accomplish and thus it is critical to be very proactive in this mission and to take advantage of every opportunity to build cross-cultural bridges. DOD must focus more on pre-event planning, exercises and training and not post-event response. Fostering an atmosphere of cooperation and developing a greater familiarity with the NRP, NIMS and ICS will go a long way to answer the President's call for a “more effective response in a time of emergency.”

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